

Sent to Board members
micro. on file - 9-15-67

NEWS OF THE VOYAGE TO AMERICA

By Rev. Pastor NgongoDavid, President of EMC and
Mr. Tshilembu Nicodeme, Inspector of Primary Schools
of the EMC of Congo

As it had been arranged by our church for us to go to America and ~~there~~ as it was agreed by the CIM Board members we left Tshikapa on May 18, 1967 to go to Kinshasa. Six o'clock that same evening we left to go to New York. We traveled all during the night and arrived in New York in the morning. We left New York and went to Chicago after which we went by car to Elkhart -- all of this the one and same day, May 19, 1967.

On Sunday, May 21 we started our meetings in Mennonite Churches, one of us here, one of us there.

On Tuesday, May 23, we met with the Board members of the CIM in the big city of Chicago. This meeting had one very big affair, that being to get acquainted face to face and to explain really what we are aiming to do in Congo and to explain where it is we want to go with our work in EMC and CIM. You must not forget that when we arranged the matters of our work last February here in Congo, we met with only a few of the board members who had been sent. But on that day in Chicago we met with nearly all of them and they wanted to hear for themselves what happened from the mouths of those who knew what had happened. We cannot tell you all the words that were spoken but here are the questions they asked us and the way in which we answered:

- What kind of thoughts do the people have with regard to the new plan of integration? How will things now go or proceed in your church conferences?
- Does EMC have a desire to separate itself from CIM?
- What are the thoughts of EMC with regard to reaching unevangelized parts of the world as the CIM has done?
- What sort of place or work will missionaries have in EMC after five or ten years?
- What about the matter of the new Theology School in Kinshasa? Shall we take part in it right away?
- How can we strengthen our work of evangelization in Congo?
- What about the problem of travel and transportation now?
- The matter of scholarships and study opportunities for young Congolese . . and other matters.

OUR ANSWERS

- People are wanting to see unity or oneness in EMC, missionaries and Congolese working together to send the work ahead. Let it no longer be said that some work is an affair of the CIM, other work the affair of the EMC.

- EMC has no thought or desire to sever relations with the CIM but ~~EMC~~ wants to continue a cooperative work as has been the case in the past.

- There is thought and concern on the part of the EMC concerning the continuing work of evangelism. This is shown by the continuing support of catechists in our villages. EMC will continue to pursue its work of evangelism in as far as there is possibility and means. But right now it is difficult to go far ahead with such plans as we are having difficulties raising the salaries of the catechists and pastors we already have in our service.

- When we have missionaries with us in Congo, EMC will give them a place and work to do. As in the past, now too in the present, we have great need for missionary helpers. But we have no way of knowing what the situation will be in five or ten years from now.

- CIM's contribution to the new Ecole de Theologie should pass via the office of EMC to be relayed by this office. And in the future in order to avoid misunderstanding and friction among us, it will be well to send all funds for whatever part of the EMC program to the EMC office at Tshikapa first.

- The responsibility for the spreading of the Gospel is with our pastors and evangelists. They have many places to go and could save much time with adequate transport but such transport is not available these days.

- Although we do have universities in Congo we ~~don't know~~ wonder if we'll be able to send some of our apt young people abroad as we did in the past. We have much joy because of our young men who came and studied in America in the past and who are now helping us so well.

After many such words the board members were happy with the affairs that were arranged in February 1967. Their hope is to help and strengthen the church of the Lord and to do as the Lord wills and as their resources permit. Thus they told us that they were agreed concerning the plan of integration as it has been planned. But they reminded us that it is still up to us to approve this plan in our general conference in Congo. After all these conversations we prayed together. Our text at this time was Ephesians 1:15.

Following this meeting with the board members we began our long journey. In our messages we often told our Mennonite brethren in America the way in which the Congo Mennonite Church was started (1912). We also told them how things are now and the direction we want to take in the future. We gave thanks for the Good News which brought us our missionaries. We also thanked them for the means they have sent with which to carry the work forward.

We explained to people how things were up until 1960. We spoke of the evacuation of the missionaries and of the troubled times we saw. We also spoke of how we received our "personnalite civile" (legal status) and of work as it is today. We explained how that since we now have our legal status, plan for integration.

the way is open for us to go forward with our work in order that EMC may truly be founded and strengthened and that it may stand on its own feet in the same way that other Mennonite Churches do in other parts of the world. We hope to help other Mennonite Churches in the years that are ahead. But all of this is dependent upon the continuing help — resources and people ~~we~~ and prayers — of our American brethren. These days we have great difficulty in finding enough teachers for our secondary ~~task~~ schools. They are incomplete because of this lack. We need teachers for the Theology School, doctors, ~~and~~ nurses, and people who can help us in our program of Christian education, artisinal training, etc. Through all of these departments we ~~have~~ ^{can} contact ~~with many~~ ^{many} people for Christ. Thus we do have the responsibility and debt to let others know about the love of God. Ezek 33:1-9 Isaiah 6:8 Acts 16:19-10

Many people had joy to hear news about the size and extent of the work we have among us. But in reality they were most happy to have the chance to hear the words and see the faces of those who are really involved in this work. Old people and young people showed a good reply to us in response to our words to them and sought ways of helping us. We told them that as far as their help for our work is concerned, they should write to the CIM office in Elkhart because this is the office we correspond with all the time concerning our needs and problems in our work in Congo. (We could get teachers but French is a problem that stops many from coming to us.)

We were asked many questions of many kinds which we cannot write here in our report because of lack of room and time but all the questions showed the joy that people have concerning the work of the Mennonite Church in Congo. Let us say that our visit rekindled the fire that had died down in the hearts of many people.

In nearly every place we went people greeted and received us with joy. Only in a very few places did we find that there had not been good preparation for our arrival. But we slept well, we ate well and this with joy also. In many families we felt as though we were truly in our own home.

In America the church is made up entirely of people who have already accepted Jesus and who are members. There are not the slightest thoughts that the church belongs to so and so or that it belongs to such and such a group. The lay people carry much weight and responsibility and the pastor is as a shepherd of sheep. Men, women, and young people have much work in the church. Some are elders in the church, some are song leaders, some are Sunday School teachers or DVBS teachers. Others help in youth camps during vacation months. Women do not slacken in their gathering together. They pray concerning the Good News in other lands, they sew things and send them in love to women of other places. We marveled greatly when we saw the headquarters of MCC at Akron.

Many people continually give their things to be sent to people who are suffering in other lands. Refugees in Congo have already received such things that come from MCC. This affair truly caused us to marvel much and it is something we need to think about, we who have a few things. We too need to remember that other people are in much need in Congo and in other countries. When we saw this we remembered some of the words of the Board members when we met with them in Chicago. It is good that EMC in Congo should carry this matter in its heart and search ways of meeting the need of other people. Missionaries we have among us in Congo and all the work that is done among us in Congo -- all is made possible by church members and Christian laymen through their giving. Their tithes and their gifts is accomplishing much work in their own land in America, in Canada and here in Congo as well. It is plain that the people have fire in their hearts and that they are applying themselves earnestly.

True, some people are there who have a faith only of the lips and who do not surpass to give themselves. In their thoughts are many affairs; on the one hand they follow the ~~affairs of the~~ affair of God but on the other they follow the affairs of men. There are some who go to watch amusements of various kinds or who go off to rest here and there or to pursue their own interests. Such people do not come to church very regularly. Although they have a desire to be church members they do not truly have life. Let such people choose what it is they want to follow. I Kings 18:21

Some churches have 30 or 40 members. There are others which ~~are~~ are larger, some having as many as 1200 members. But the budget of each church and the salary of each pastor is the weight and responsibility of the members of his church. In comparison with his studies, the pastor's salary is a bit small but his church gives him a house to live in.

The churches in America are well organized and ~~are~~ well built in many places. When it is time for service, everyone arrives without hearing a church bell. It is not difficult for them since they have means of transportation and they have good roads. We saw that they depend upon and honor the clock very greatly. This is good but the clock should not be our master. It is well that we be the master of the clock too sometimes.

We were not chased away in one single place because we were black people. But this is not to say that the fight between black and white people in America has ceased. We know that South Africa and America are the two places where the matter of the color of the body is made very difficult. In our travels we journeyed in churches in the northern part of the United States. We believe that in those churches they were told to be careful so that such problems would not arise. We do know that the government in America is fighting very hard to put an end to the problem of color. It is fighting even now to finish it. We even saw a bit of racial prejudice in some of the churches we visited

on the part of a few people. For example we ~~would~~^{might} be standing in a line, someone would come up to greet the missionary who ~~had~~^{might} translated in the service as well as the pastor of that church but we ~~would~~^{might} be ignored. I personally, Tshilembu Nicodeme, had one experience ~~in the city of Salem, Oregon~~^{on the west coast} which gave me shame. ~~If you read this and want to come to me, I will tell you about it.~~ If you read this and want to come to me, I will tell you about it. As far as we are concerned, such an incident seems to say, "I am a white person, he is a black person".

This is something that causes us great amazement. There are ordinary people who make no profession of faith, who are active trying to end the racial strife, while others who claim they are Christians are hindering the work of the Lord through their attitudes! Who is it that created white, red and black people? Where is the man who of himself chose to be white, red or black? Only God himself saw that it was good that it should be so. Genesis 1:31 But this cannot weaken us for this is simply the error of human beings as they are found in Congo, in America, in Canada and in other lands. But let the children of God beware. Let them strive to do and act as God wants, may they be a light before the eyes of the lost. Mat 5:16

America and Canada are countries that have already gone far ahead. There are good roads, good bridges, transport is simple. There are many factories and people have many occupations and much work to do. It appears as though things and affairs run automatically. People work hard; men, women and also students during their vacations. The big affair is to work so as to earn money. We observed that Mennonites especially like the work of farming. They have great fields and much livestock. Work is not difficult for them because they have machines that do the work of men.

OUR TRIP

In general we give EMC and CIM thanks for having made it possible to travel in all these places. We did not travel with the idea of returning to Congo to transplant all we saw there back into Congo or to Americanize or Canadianize the EMC in Congo. It is good to look at things in both places and to choose that which can help us and to leave that which does not appeal to us. But our itinerary was designed in a way to help us to understand the affairs of America. It was set up only for the purpose of having us inform them concerning the affairs of Congo. Since our itinerary and program had been set up before hand, we became the slaves of that program. We travelled long distances (for example 800 miles or 1.350 kilometers in a single day). We had services in a different town each day, slept in a different bed each night, and travelled here and there, suitcases in hand. The time for meetings ~~was~~ short. We'd go to a service, we'd tell the people the affairs we had to tell them, we'd do and sleep. Next morning we'd start travelling for some other destination. We were

as prisoners. And thus it was until July 21, 1967 and our date to leave America for Amsterdam was July 22, 1967! We had no time to breath for two months. In some churches they had services four times, in others three times. Such a schedule of travel is not good. If in the future other people will make such a trip, it would be well to turn these thoughts over so that they may have time to breath here and there and time to see well the affairs that are among the people.

CONCLUSION

In this report we have spoken of the ^{various} affairs that we heard and saw but above everything else we again want to give our thanks to the following people:

- The EMC of Congo which chose us as their delegates or messengers to the country of America and other lands;
- The ~~secret~~ executive secretary of CIM and its board members for their arrangements that made it possible for us to visit many places and many Mennonite Churches in America and Canada;
- The pastors and elders and everyone in all of these churches who received us and welcomed us among them;
- The families that welcomed us into their homes as though we were their own kin and provided beds and food for us;
- Our driver Mr. Henry ~~Brown~~ for his driving of the machine and for bringing us from place to place at the correct hour until the days of our itinerary were finished;
- Our translators for the work they did. We know that there were ~~no~~ great difficulties in translating our words and we had joy because of this;
- The ~~General Motors~~ ^{Delaware Ford} Company which furnished a machine for our trip. ~~without cost though we travelled many miles. Because~~ It was a good machine, ~~we~~ travelled everywhere well without even one break down. (May the Lord help them in their work);
- We give God thanks for his good protection during the whole trip. Sometimes the bodies were weak but he caused us to pass through all affairs with strength. We travelled everywhere well and returned to our homes with strength and joy.

Psalm 145:18-20

For the EMC delegation

Written by Tshilembu Nicodeme



Rev. James Reusser (left), Tshilembu Nicodeme (centre) and Rev. Ngongo David.

Record Photo

2 Congo Churchmen Here To Learn, Teach Instead

It was chaotic.

The two Congolese church officials were exploding verbally, one in French and the other in Tshiluba. Two interpreters were trying to converse with the reporter in English, translate the questions and stem the flow of words from their Congolese friends who seemed to want to have a discussion rather than be interviewed.

When Charles E. Sprunger, born a son of missionary parents in The Congo couldn't find a Tshiluba word he threw in a French one. The odd English phrase with a French accent added to the general confusion as he tried to translate.

Mr. Sprunger, on furlough from his own missionary service in The Congo, has been evacuated three times from trouble areas there. He has spent all his life (except for his school years) in that country.

Fremont Regier, the other translator, is an agricultural missionary also on furlough from The Congo. He spent part of the time discussing the current situation of unrest in The Congo—at least that is what it sounded like.

Rev. Ngongo David, 63, president of the Congo Mennonite Church and Tshilembu Nicodeme, 34, school inspector for the church's primary schools and also assistant legal representative of the church, were tired and worn out from their two-month whirlwind trip of North America. They were welcomed by Rev. James Reusser when they spoke at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church one night this week.

They are supposed to be learning about the church in North America and teaching North Americans about the Congolese church.

"But when it comes to learning about the churches in

America we are asked to talk for 30 to 40 minutes and then they want to go home, and then we go to bed and the next morning we just take off for somewhere else. Actually we've done more teaching than learning," said Mr. Nicodeme.

"We've travelled a lot (more than 12,000 miles by car) seen marvellous roads and buildings, but we really haven't had a chance to find out what the church is like here. Why do they bring us here just to rush through cities," demanded Mr. David waving his hands as he talked.

There is no room in their tight schedule of one-night lectures throughout the country for them to see Expo 67, although they would like to cancel some of their appointments and go.

Henry Braun, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Langeman, 79 John St. E., Waterloo, has been their chauffeur much of the way. He speaks French and some Tshiluba after spending two years in the Mennonite voluntary Pax service in the Congo.

They felt unable to comment on the current political upheavals in The Congo because they have not been there for two months and know only what they read in the news reports.

"When people are in trouble and there's warfare and people are hiding in the forest, you just can't gather out in

the open to have worship services," said Mr. Nicodeme.

"The church is not in politics. We keep out of it. The state doesn't tell us that you can't worship, but you just don't gather in large groups when there is civil unrest. Individuals don't want to be gathered someplace where soldiers might chase someone through," added Mr. David.

They said there was less fragmentation of the Protestant church in The Congo than here and that the different denominations worked well together, helping each other out, producing literature and radio programs together.

"It's not a competition thing there. We're just glad if the next guy will work with us," Mr. Regier said.

The two Congolese officials also made it clear that the Congolese don't want to run the whole church by themselves, but want it to be a co-operative effort with the missionaries.

There is no feeling that this is just a white man's religion and Congolese Christians aren't persecuted or disapproved of by other Congolese.

There are about 30,000 members of the Congo Mennonite Church.

Mr. David and Mr. Nicodeme, who are out of The Congo for the first time, are touring North America before going to the Mennonite World Conference in Amsterdam later this month.

June 23/67
Albany, Oregon.

Dear Reuben;

It's been too long since I last wrote to you. Please excuse me. This itinerary is quite demanding - especially where so much "free time" is taken in visiting and learning to know our hosts and hostesses. Nevertheless, it has been a good experience, fellowshipping with people who are so friendly and hospitable. I hope the men feel as blessed as their chauffeur does.

Earl Roth declared a holiday for me while we are in Oregon. He relieved me of all driving responsibilities until tomorrow morning. With two days at my leisure, I will be able to catch up with correspondence, etc.

In general, the people all the way from Luster, Montana to here have shown a real interest and delight in having Nick and David speak to them. The Lame Deer meeting was really good in that it enabled the two men to experience another way of life in America and a different mission field. They were

seemly interested in the way of life of earlier Indians and kept our host pretty busy answering questions. I'm not sure how they feel about all the mountains here in the west. It seems to bother them: that there are so many in which there is hardly any good farming possibilities. Los Angeles was another New York or Chicago to them. In Paso Robles area, we toured the countryside and looked at Ruth Roth's former home. The men go for this sort of thing quite a bit.

In the Fresno church, someone asked David what impressed him most here in the U.S.A. He responded by saying that the roads were the biggest thing and next was the large farms. The roads enabled the farmers to transport their produce to market.

Both men are doing fine and are putting on weight. They really dig in and eat everything that's put before them (variety, that is). They seem to be in fine health and attitude. Will keep you in touch.
Yours in Christ, Henry

June 16, 1967

Rev. John Wiebe
Box 162
Carrot River, Saskatchewan,
CANADA

Dear Brother Wiebe:

I am assuming that you received a copy of my June 5 letter to Rev. Paul Schroeder indicating the change of schedule for the Congolese visiting in Canada.

They will be planning to arrive at Carrot River on July 3. I am suggesting to them that they should plan to be at your home for directions for the evening meal and then lodging for the night, etc.

I really appreciate the fact that you brethren were willing to make some adjustment on this schedule for them because it helps much in the matter of travel.

The men seem to be doing quite well and I hope that they will be able to arrive in good order. I would suggest that you try to give them as much opportunity as possible for rest besides, of course, getting as much mileage out of them in conversation, etc. I realize that the two work against each other, but we are trying to save their physical bodies as well as work them real hard at the same time.

From your area they will be moving on to the Steinbach-Morris area of Manitoba. This is a rather long journey so no doubt they will be wishing to leave on the morning of July 4 and start for that area.

The group will consist of Henry Braun--the driver, the Congolese brethren, Lois Slagle and Ruth Roth. You will be able to use these people in two churches at the same time because you will have two translators. Also you will observe that Tshilembu Nicodeme will be able to speak English rather freely. He can understand just about everything you say if you speak slowly and distinctly. Even Ngongo David has picked up much English and will be understanding a lot of it. Better not have any secrets in English you do not want them to understand because they can pick them up.

We do thank you for opening your church doors to these brethren and it is my sincere hope that you will find them very useful in contributing to the cause of missions in your area. I am sure you will be delighted with them if they still have any energy left when they arrive. It is very possible that they will be getting a little tired after so long a journey in this country.

John Wiebe
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June 16, 1967

Warm greetings and best wishes to all of your people at Carrot River. I still remember the pleasant time we had together when I gave that community a visit several years ago.

Prayerfully Yours,

Reuben Short
Executive Secretary

RS:11

cc: Henry Braun

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June 9, 1967

Mr. Henry Braun
c/o ~~Rev. Walter Dirks~~ *Alvin Eitzen*
~~Box 37~~ *North Star Route*
~~Busby, Montana 59016~~ *Frazier, Montana 59225*

Dear Henry:

Enclosed find two additional letters to give further guidance on your trip. I do not yet have a reply from Rev. Albert Epp of Los Angeles, but hopefully look forward to such in the near future. Will try to pass such information to you when it arrives. If it does not come in time, I may need to call you.

Having talked to Elmer Dick this morning, I am encouraged to learn that the men appear to be taking the trip in stride. I was a little bit concerned after the Newton office had called me and indicated that they were showing considerable weariness from their experience there. Obviously with a scheduled that they had on Sunday at Newton, anyone would be getting quite weary. Perhaps now the schedule will be a little lighter all the way along. I have no Sunday in which they are loaded with four services each. They will have some where there will be two or three services, but nothing of the schedule that they had before.

We are glad that everything is moving along as well as might possibly be expected. The limited reports we have from where they have been, have been encouraging. We do hope and pray that everything will continue to move on real good.

I would suggest that as you make the mountain drives, that extra caution be taken on those mountain curves. It is possible that these might scare the wits out of them and I would urge that you do everything possible to ease the possibility of such fear. I am of the opinion that they have never crossed a mountain of this type before and thus it could be a thrilling experience but also a little frightening experience. I am sure that you are taking every precaution possible to help them enjoy the trip as much as possible.

Thank you for your services and hopefully we look forward to them continuing on through to the final destination of New York.

Cordially Yours,

Reuben Short
Executive Secretary

RS:11

Lance Deer
June 14/67

Dear Reuben;

Here's a note to let you know that we are still on schedule. It's been hard on the passengers 'till now, but the driver is beginning to feel some of the pressure, too. There needs to be more free time in which to gather oneself together and even get some exercise. Naturally, all of us are looking healthier every day, but we sure don't feel up to par. Don't take me wrong - none of us is sick to my knowledge.

Nick expressed discontent with running to & fro for meals and lodging when we are in an area for just a day, but I tried to console him & help him see, again, his purpose for being on this tour. We'll make it all right!

The people here in Montana have really given us a warm welcome. These fellows are making a real hit with the congregations.

Both Nick and David seemed to be especially interested in the lives of the Indians in this area. This evening's service was full and lasted a good two hours. The people asked a lot of questions as did the others in ^{the} Lustré area.

To-morrow will be a long tiresome haul over to Aberdeen, Idaho. I hope we get there in good time.

Nicodème sends greetings (i.e. Muoyo!) to you. Same from me! Goodnight!

Yours sincerely,
Henry.

June 7/67
Henderson, Neb.

Dear Reuben;

Here's a note to supplement our telephone discussion and answer your last letter of June 1. I apologize for not writing sooner. You wanted to know how things were going and how these men were being received. I'll try to give a fair evaluation.

Although some meetings were not well-attended, the response of the people in general has been good. They seem to be drawn to David and 'Nick' in a way which should bring them closer to mission work and the need for money and, especially, personnel. It seems that as we progress through the itinerary, the reception improves. Perhaps ~~it~~ the reason for this is the fact that David & Nick are over much of the initial cultural shock. They seem to feel more at home as Christian brethren. Their "stagefright" has apparently gone and they are more open and specific in their talks. This renewal of

June 7/67

their self-confidence is reflected in their attitudes toward their audiences. The people really look up to them, and they are amazed at how well the men present themselves.

I hope that David will continue to speak to the spiritual deficiency of people both here and in Congo. I hope he will be able to put new life in much of the "dead-wood" of our churches. He has a remarkable ability to associate with people and fit right in with what they are doing. As Fremont pointed out, he falls all over himself to learn to know people whereas Nick is more reserved & dignified. He is a real 'live-wire' for Jesus Christ and the work of His church.

As I learn to know them better, I can better appreciate them. Thus far, the translators have done a wonderful job, too. The Itinerary has gone smoothly except for a few busy spots. That's all for now! We need your prayers!

Sincerely yours,

Henry

P.S. Please don't make any changes in the Itinerary unless we ask for them. They're doing fine! H.C.